

24 MAR 1968

FOIAB3b

CPYRGHT

Another Opinion

Philby: 'I Stayed the Course'

The following are excerpts from the book, "My Secret War," by Kim Philby, one-time head of British anti-Soviet intelligence and—simultaneously—"the best spy the Russians ever had," according to Allen Dulles, former head of the C.I.A. Mr. Philby fled to the Soviet Union in 1963. His book will be published in the United States on May 1 by Grove Press.

My transition from a Socialist viewpoint to a Communist one took two years. It was not until my last term at Cambridge, in the summer of 1933, that I threw off my last doubts. I left the university with a degree and with the conviction that my life must be devoted to Communism.

I have long since lost my degree (indeed, I think it is the possession of M15). But I have retained the conviction. It is here, perhaps, that a doubt may assail the reader. It cannot be so very surprising that I adopted a Communist viewpoint in the thirties; so many of my contemporaries made the same choice. But many of those who made that choice in those days changed sides when some of the worst features of Stalinism became apparent. I stayed the course. It is reasonable to ask why.

It is extremely difficult for

the ordinary human being, lacking the gift of total recall, to describe exactly how he reached such-and-such a decision more than thirty years ago. In my own case, an attempt to do so would make the question will be asked, it must be answered, even if the pallingly tedious reading. But as answer takes the form of gross oversimplification.

It seemed to me, when it became clear that much was going badly wrong in the Soviet Union, that I had three possible courses of action. First, I could give up politics altogether. This I knew to be quite impossible. It is true that I have tastes and enthusiasms outside politics; but it is politics alone that give them meaning and coherence. Second, I could continue political activity on a totally different basis. But where was I to go? The politics of the Baldwin-Chamberlain era struck me then, as they strike me now, as much more then the politics of folly. The folly was evil. I saw the road leading me into the political position of the querulous outcast, of the Koestler-Crankshaw-Muggeridge variety, railing at the movement that had let me down, at the God that had failed me.

The third course of action

open to me was to stick it out, in the confident faith that the principles of the Revolution would outlive the aberration of individuals, however enormous. It was the course I chose, guided partly by reason, partly by instinct. Graham Greene, in a book appropriately called "The Confidential Agent," imagines a scene in which the heroine asks the hero if his leaders are any better than the others. "No. Of course not," he replies, "But I still prefer the people they lead—even if they lead them all wrong." "The poor, right or wrong," she scoffed. "It's no worse—is it?—than my country, right or wrong. You choose your side once and for all—of course—but it may be the wrong side. Only history can tell that."

The passage throws some light on my attitude in the depths of the Stalin cult. But I now have no doubt about the verdict of history. My persisting faith in Communism does not mean that my views and attitudes have remained fossilized for thirty odd years. They have been influenced and modified, sometimes rudely, by the appalling events of my lifetime. I have quarrelled with my political friends on major issues, and still do so. There is still an awful lot of work ahead; there will be ups and downs. Advances, which, thirty years ago, I hoped to see in my lifetime, may have to wait a generation or two. But, as I look over Moscow from my study window, I can see the solid foundations of the future I glimpsed at Cambridge.